

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SAIGON 06920 220354 Z

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 6920

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PINS MILI VS

SUBJECT: SITREP FOR APRIL 20, 1973

FOLLOWING RECEIVED FROM AMCONSUL CAN THO BEING REPEATED.

QUOTE

CAN THO 214

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, MOPS, PINS, CA, CB, HU, ID, PL, VS

SUBJECT: SITREP FOR APRIL 20, 1973

1. SUMMARY: GVN ATTEMPTS TO CLEAR THE EAST BANK OF THE MEKONG IN HONG NGU DISTRICT RESULTED IN HEAVY FIGHTING. REGION VII CANADIAN AND INDONESIAN DELEGATIONS INTERVIEWED ON APRIL 19 AN NVA PRISONER CAPTURED DURING THE HONG NGU FIGHTING (CAN THO 0205). VC EFFORTS TO REPOPULATE THEIR BASE AREAS ARE HAVING SOME SUCCESS IN AN XUYEN. A PROVINCE CHIEF VIEWS RENEWED US BOMBING IN LAOS AS A POSSIBLE PRELIMINARY TO SUCH ACTION IN VIET NAM. END SUMMARY.

2. SECURITY SITUATION: MR IV REPORTED 40 VC/ NVA INITIATED INCIDENTS APRIL 19. ONLY ONE WAS A GROUND ATTACK. THERE WAS ALSO ONLY ONE TERRORIST INCIDENT, AN EXPLOSION IN A DINH TUONG SNACK BAR. ALL THE OTHER INCIDENTS WERE ATTACKS BY FIRE AND HARRASSMENTS, THE MAJORITY OF WHICH OCCURRED IN CHUONG THIEN. THE GROUND ATTACK TOOK PLACE
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PAGE 02 SAIGON 06920 220354 Z

ON THE BINH TRI MOUNTAIN PENINSULA IN KIEN TUONG DISTRICT, KIEN GIANG. A COMPANY SIZE ELEMENT OF K-5 OR K-6 NVA BATTALIONS OF THE E-46 REGIMENT IS STILL HOLDING OUT IN THIS AREA WHICH THE GVN PREVIOUSLY CLAIMED WAS SECURED BY THE RANGERS (CAN THO -140). INCIDENT NUMBERS ARE SELDOM A RELIABLE INDICATION BY THEMSELVES OF THE LEVEL OF MILITARY ACTIVITY. MOST OF THE FIGHTING APRIL 19 TOOK PLACE WHEN 14 CVN "SECURITY OPERATIONS" WERE ATTACKED BY THE ENEMY. THE HEAVIEST FIGHTING TOOK PLACE IN THE HONG NGU AREA AS THE GVN CONTINUED ITS OPERATIONS TO CLEAR THE MEKONG RIVER EAST BANK. GVN CASUALTIES FOR THE DAY WERE 20 KIA AND 184 WIA.

3. ICCS/ JMC: (A). REGION VII CANADIAN AND INDONESIAN DELEGATIONS INTERVIEWED ON APRIL 19 AN NVA PRISONER CAPTURED DURING THE HONG NGU FIGHTING (CAN THO 0205). THE POLES AND HUNGARIANS REFUSED TO ACCOMPANY, CLAIMING THE POW EXCHANGE PHASE WAS OVER AND POST- CEASEFIRE PRISONERS FELL OUTSIDE THEIR LEGAL COMPETENCE. THE NVA PRISONER, A COMMUNICATIONS SERGEANT, ADMITTED HIS UNIT'S MISSION WAS THE INTERDICTION OF PHNOM PENH BOUND RIVER CONVOYS. HE CLAIMED TO HAVE ENTERED VIET NAM BEFORE THE CEASEFIRE TOOK EFFECT. OTHERWISE THE PRISONER WAS HUMOROUSLY ILL INFORMED. ASKED WHO COMPRISED THE FPJMC HE REPLIED, CANADA, RUSSIA, CHINA, AND THE US. THE JCCS HE SAID INCLUDED CANADA AND OTHER COUNTRIES, THE NAMES OF WHICH WERE TOO HARD TO PRONOUNCE OR REMEMBER. (B). JMC: RELIABLE GVN SOURCES IN MY THO REPORT THEY EXPECT THE ADVANCE PARTY OF THE PRG TPJMC TEAM TO ARRIVE SOON, PERHAPS IN THE NEXT COUPLE OF WEEKS. THIS REPORT IS SIMILAR TO ONE ALREADY REPORTED FROM ICCS QUAN LONG AND TRI TON (CAN THO 0202). THE REPORT MAY REFLECT GVN HOPES RATHER THAN CONCRETE INFORMATION.

4. COMMUNIST ACTIVITY: THE VC CONTINUE TO PRESS THEIR "RETURN TO VILLAGE" CAMPAIGN. THE USAID DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTATIVE IN AN XUYEN PROVINCE STATES HE HAS RECEIVED RECONFIRMATION OF AN EARLIER REPORTED SHIFT OF POPULATION FROM GVN TO VC PORTIONS OF THOI BINH DISTRICT. APPROXIMATELY 300 FAMILIES AND 4 ARVN DESERTERS HAVE MOVED TO VC AREAS. THE REASONS FOR THE MOVES INCLUDE ENTICEMENT BY VC RELATIVES, BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES IN THE NEW AREA FOR WOOD CUTTERS AND CHARCOAL MAKERS, AND UNSPECIFIED GVN HARRASSMENT. NO OTHER MAJOR POPULATION SHIFTS HAVE OCCURRED YET IN AN XUYEN.

5. GVN ACTIVITY: THE DINH TUONG PROVINCE CHIEF NOTED AT HIS
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PAGE 03 SAIGON 06920 220354 Z

APRIL 19 MORNING BRIEFING, THE RESUMPTION OF US B52 BOMBING OF LAOS. HE REMARKED THAT THE DEVELOPMENT WAS OMINOUS IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT A CEASEFIRE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE IN EFFECT THERE. HE SAID THE DRV WAS STILL TRYING TO ESTABLISH A 1000 MILE FLANKING POSITION NEXT TO VIETNAM. THE PROVINCE CHIEF IMPLIED A SIMILAR RESUMPTION OF US BOMBING MIGHT SOON BE NECESSARY IN SOUTH VIET NAM.

6. SELECTED PROVINCE COMMENT: BASED ON CONVERSATIONS IN KIEN HOA, THE VICE CONSUL CONSIDERS THAT GVN RESPECT FOR AND LEVEL OF COOPERATION WITH THE ICCS WILL GRADUALLY DETERIORATE OVER THE COMING WEEKS, ALTHOUGH PRO FORMA COOPERATION WILL CONTINUE. ALTHOUGH THE GVN WAS ALWAYS CERTAIN OF CANADIAN AND INDONESIAN IMPARTIALITY IT HAD TO OVERCOME MUCH INITIAL DISTRUST OF THE ICCS CONCEPT BECAUSE IT WAS CERTAIN OF POLE AND HUNGARIAN PARTIALITY. THE GVN FEARED THAT THE ONLY UNANIMOUS CEASEFIRE FINDING WOULD BE AGAINST ITSELF. SINCE THE PRG HAS NOT PROTESTED GVN VIOLATIONS AT REGION VI SUB-TEAM LEVEL, THE GVN HAS NOT BEEN CHARGED WITH BREAKING THE CEASEFIRE. THE POLES AND HUNGARIANS, HOWEVER, REFUSE TO ADMIT THAT VC CEASEFIRE VIOLATIONS TAKE PLACE AT ALL. MANY GVN OFFICIALS SEE THE LAO BAO INCIDENT AS THE MOST SERIOUS TEST OF THE ICCS. THE GVN WILL ALSO WATCH INTERNATIONAL REACTION TO THE INCIDENT KNOWING THAT THE GVN WOULD BE CONDEMNED IF IT WERE RESPONSIBLE. IN KIEN HOA GVN EYES AT LEAST, ICCS FAILURE TO CONDEMN THE LAO BAO INCIDENT WOULD SOUND ITS DEATHKNELL. BARNES UNQUOTE
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